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(11)

ŚREE NĀRĀYANA TEERTHA

(B.M. SUNDARAM)

India is a holy land that has produced multitudes of sages, seers, mystics, saints, philosophers and so on. Highly evolved souls come on the earth, designated by Divine Will, to help in disseminating Spirituality and Religion. Many of them, born in some corner of the country, moved over to other parts, stayed there either for some time or throughout, writing religious works or commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, preaching philosophy or devotion towards God and the tenets of Dharma and attained salvation, leaving a host of disciples, to continue their work, devotees and followers. Śree Śankara, for instance, who stabilized Advaita Siddhānta (Monism) was born in the southernmost Kerala and travelled through the length and breadth of the country. Among such great divine personages, Śree Nārāyaṅa Teertha was one. 'Teertha', the

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term used in monastic order, means 'One, who, without diminishing his own sanctity, makes others sanctified".

It is said that Nārāyaṅa Teertha was born in the present Andhra Pradesh, but migrated to Tamilnadu and lived in the district of Tanjavur, till he attained liberation, about which we shall see later in detail. Also it is said that he, right from a very early age, had a bent of spiritual mind and was not inclined to get himself entangled in the bondage called 'marriage'. But, his tender heart and extreme affection towards his mother made him heed to the compulsive requests of the mother and had to give in, after initial protests. Forced to marry, his restless spirit yearned to break out of the cage, more forcefully than ever and at the appropriate moment, flew out of the cage. But, throughout his ordeal, while in the household, his character remained spotless, not even a ripple of worldliness ever arose in his mind. He was an 'Eeśvarakőṭi'. This means a

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liberated soul of the highest class, an individual, who is eternally free from 'Karma' and who allows himself to be reborn, simply to do good to mankind.

Śree Nārāyaṅa Teertha is famous by his work, 'Śree Krshṅa Leelā Tarangiṅi' (hereinafter indicated as SKLT), although some other works are also to his credit. They are:-- 1. Subŏdhinee—a commentary on Śree Śankara's 'bhāshya' to the 'Brahma Sūtras'; 2. Vivaraṅa Deepikā—a commentary on 'Pancheekaraṅa Vārttikā', a work by Surėśvarāchārya, the disciple of Śree Śankara; 3.Haribhakti Sudhārṅavam—a 'kāvya' based on the tenth canto of 'Śreemad Bhāgavatam' and 4. Pārijātāpaharaṅam—a dance-drama on some episodes of Lord Krshṅā's life, for enactment by the Bhāgavatas of Melattūr, a village near Tanjavur and famous for Bhāgavata mėḷa. Pandit P.S. Subramania Śāstri says in his "History of Sanskrit Literature', that 'Bhatta Bhāshya Pradeepikā' is also a work of Nārāyaṅa Teertha. This statement has been disregarded by some scholars, on various grounds, though there is a verse mentioning the Teertha's name and that of his

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guru.:--*Bhagavad Śivarāma Teertha śishyŏ muni Nārāyaṅa Teertha nāmadhėya:* | It is a work on 'Pūrva Meemāmsā'. 'Bhakti Chandrikā', a commentary on the Bhakti sūtras of Śāṅḍilya, is also attributed by some to Teertha. A work with the same title and authorship is available in the Sarasvati Mahāl library at Tanjavur. A scrutiny makes it clear that this could not be a work of Nārāyaṅa Teertha, author of SKLT. Dr. Mangaldėv Śāstri, editor of 'Bhakti Chandrikā' has given a list of Teertha's other works. They are:-- Tatva Chandrikā (Sānkhya Tatva Kaumudi Vyākhyā), Nyāya Kusumānjali Vyākhyā, Bhaktiyadhikaraṅa Mālā, Yŏga Chandrikā, Yŏga Sūtra Vrutti, Vėdastava Ṭheekā, Vėdānta Vibhāvitā, Sānkhya Chandrikā, Siddhānta Bindu Mahāvyākhyā and Laghu Vyākhyā for the same above work. But the genuineness of Teertha's authorship to these works is yet to be ascertained. 'Śree Varada Venkatėśa Mahimā Stŏtram', a bunch of 125 ślŏkas, ascribed to Teertha, was published in 1935 and again in 1968. Dr.V. Raghavan has averred that this could not be a work of Nārāyaṅa Teertha.

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His SKLT is an opera, based on chapters 1 to 58 in the tenth Skanda of 'Śreemad Bhāgavatam'. Songs of this work were collected by Marudānallūr Kuzhandai Svāmigaḷ (1782/1817), generally known as Sadguru Svāmigaḷ in the Bhajana tradition, for use in the Bhajana congregations. The complete work in Grantha script was brought out in 1868 and the second edition of Tillaisthānam Narasimha Bhāgavatar came out in 1913. It is learnt that Narasimha Bhāgavatar was able to get the manuscript of this work in Melattūr, where he worked as a school teacher, before he switched over to Harikathā Kālakshepam.

SKLT comprises of 155 songs, 348 ślőkas etc. Customarily, authors of poetic works or musical compositions use to stamp with some 'ankita' or 'mudra' (a signature) at the end of every piece or chapter. This practice, we find, at least from the Tevaram period (6th to 9th centuries). Nārāyaṅa Teertha was no exception. His 'ankita' differs in many compositions, while similar in some others. Also we find that about 36 compositions in his SKLT bear no mudra at all. His mudras are:--

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Nārāyaṅa Teertha—51; Śiva Nārāyaṅa Teertha—28; Vara Nārāyaṅa Teertha—11; Dheera Nārāyaṅa Teertha—4; Gurubhakta Nārāyaṅa Teertha—3; Sarasa Nārāyaṅa Teertha, Bhavya Nārāyaṅa Teertha and Yati Nārāyaṅa Teertha—2 each; Vishṅubhakta Nārāyaṅa Teertha, Śree Haribhakta Nārāyaṅa Teertha, Muni Nārāyaṅa teertha, Bhakta Nārāyaṅa Teertha, Chitta Nārāyaṅa Teertha, Nija Nārāyaṅa Teertha, Yŏgivara Nārāyaṅa Teertha, Sādhu Nārāyaṅa Teertha and Śivarāma Teertha padāmbuja bhramara—1 each. Similarly, in his 'Pārijātāpaharaṅam', of which only a fragment is now available, he has used 'ankita' as follows:-- Nārāyaṅa Teertha Varada (*Āḍudāmu rārė*), Nārāyaṅa Teertha nāthuḍu (*Dheeruḍu navaneeta chŏruḍu*), Nārāyaṅa Teerthula (*Ēlāgunė vėgintu*), Dheera Nārāyaṅa Teertha (*Hari Hari Ānanda*), Śreeman Nārāyaṅa Teertha Varada (*Aksheeṅa karuṅa*), Sarasa Nārāyaṅa Teertha (*Nannu rāvasėya*), Śiva Nārāyaṅa Teertha (*Bhā neekinta*) and so on. Almost all the scholars, who wrote about Teertha, hold the view that he was initiated by Śree Śivarāma (Śivarāmānanda) Teertha, as evident from the ankita used by Teertha. Varahūr

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Gurusvāmi Śāstrigaḷ explains that the word 'Śiva' prefixed in some mudras of Teertha, clearly indicates Śree Śivarāma Teertha as his guru. The colophon in 'Vivarańa Deepikā' (*iti Śivarāma Teertha pūjyapāda śishya Śiva Nārāyańa Teertha kruta Pancheekarańa Vārttikā vivarańa Deepikā samāptā*) also subscribes to this view. The word, 'Śiva', in general, may also mean 'auspicious'.

Details about Nārāyańa Teertha's life, either in short or at length, are available from a number of books and articles. To cite a few:--

Śikyőtsava Prabandha—Varahūr Nārāyańa Kavi;

Venkaṭēśapriyā—a commentary on SKLT by Varahūr V.S.V. Gurusvāmi Śāstrigaḷ;

Śreemad Varāhapura Śree Venkaṭēśa Suprabhātam and some other hymns—Varahūr Gurusvāmi Śāstrigaḷ;

Ēńippađigaḷil māndargaḷ—Śivan Svāmigaḷ;

Tiruppūnturutti Śree Nārāyańa Teerthāḷ charitram—T.T. Ariyanāyaka Mudaliar;

Great Composers—Prof. P. Sambamurthi;

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Kshėtrayya—Dr. B. Rajanikanta Rao;

Śree Krshńa Leelā Tarangińi—(Dėvanāgari script) Edited by Nőri Narasimha Śāstri (Sāhitee Samiti, Rėpalle, AP);

S K L T—(Telugu edition)—Raja Venkatādri Appā Rao, Zamindar of Vuyyūr, AP;

S K L T—(Dėvanāgari) Vāviḷḷa edition—Foreward by Dewan Bahadur K.S. Ramasvami Sastri and Appreciative notes by N.S. Narasimhachari;

Sangeeta Sampradāya Pradarśini (Vāggėyakāra Charitam)—Ettayapuram Subbarāma Deekshitar;

Chőẓha Mańḍalattu Varalātru Nāyakargaḷin Śiŕpangaḷum Őviyangaḷum—Kudavoyil M. Balasubramanian;

Articles in the Sangeet Natak Akademi Journals—Dr. V. Raghavan; Prof.P. Sambamurthi;

Writings of Svāmi Śivaśankara Śāstri, Svaminatha Ātrėyan, T.S. Parthasarathi, Kurugańti Seetarama Rao, Dr. V.R.S. Chalapati, Dr. Dhara Ramanatha Sastri and many others.

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Since all the details about N. Teertha voiced in the works and writings mentioned above are based only on legends and versions that have come a long way through oral tradition, they are naturally conflicting with each other at this or that point. More or less well-researched and best work that discusses the data given in the list of books, cited above is SKLT by B. Natarajan, in two volumes. It is a monumental study on Śiva Nārāyaṅa Teertha, that would definitely have consumed hard, persistent labour and a dedicated one. No doubt, B. Natarajan has presented all details, in a meticulous way. Still, as is natural, it has some discrepancies. He very rightly points out, "the recorded evidence on which to draw conclusions is very meager". The earlier works contain many conflicting data:--

Teertha's original name:-----	Gővinda Śāstri	----Mādhava
Father's name:--	Neelakaṅtha Śāstri	----Gandharva
Place of Birth:--	Kāzā (AP)	----Vellattoor (AP)

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Guru's name:--	Śivarāma Teertha	--- Vāsudėva
Took to Sanyāsa:--	In the floods of the river, Krshńā (AP)	---In the floods of the river --- Veńńār (Tanjavur district)
Samādhi:	Varahūr	---Tiruppūnturutti

Well recorded authentic history, particularly in the field of Fine Arts, is a lacuna in our country and as such, we are in a quandary, giving rise to variously imagined or concocted stories, with regard to the life-sketches of many Vāggėyakāras and saints. This is, no doubt, a matter of regret. N.Teertha was a great saint and Vāggėyakāra, revered and respected by the people. Śree Tyāgarāja, in his 'Prahlāda Bhakti Vijayam' adores Teertha as : "*Śree Nārāyańa Teerthādi bhagavad dāsulanella….*". Kāncheepuram Venkaṭādri Svāmigaḷ, in one of his compositions, mentions, " *Keerttikruta Śreeman Nārāyańa Teertha mānasa sārasa sundara..*" (Vijayagőpāla tė Mangaḷam). By the way, the seventh song in the tenth Taranga of SKLT, we find the usage of 'Vijayagőpāla', in the refrain of each line.

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'Venkatėśpriyā' notifies, "*Yan nāma pathanam manāgapi yatėrőnkāra lakshādhikam*" (Even once if his—Teertha's---name is uttered, it would bring in copious benefits, more than by chanting the Prańava, for one lakh times). This is the common belief of many devotees of N.Teertha. The saint was an Advaitin (monist), but chose Krshńa, as his favourite personal god, having had no discrimination between Śiva and Vishńu. Advaita, as is wrongly considered by many, never insists that one should worship only Lord Śiva. Advaita is different from exclusive Śaivism. In fact, Śree Śankara Bhagavadpāda, who propounded and established Advaitic doctrine, has composed stőtras on Rama, Krshńa, Narasimha, Gővinda and such other forms of Vishńu. He is adored as 'Shańmata Sthāpanāchārya'. Did not the great Advaitin, Appayya Deekshita (1554/1626) write a commentary to 'Yādhavābhyudayam', a work by the great and staunch Vaishńava Āchārya, Śree Vėdānta Dėśika? Madhusūdana Sarasvati (1540/1567), the advaitic dialectician, was an ardent devotee of his personal god, Krshńa. This is the uniqueness of Advaita, that hail every God of every (supposed) religion,

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with catholicity, in the Saguńa level (God with form), while emphasizing the Nirguńa (formless) Ultimate, to attain which should be the highest goal of every human being.

As regards the period of Nārāyańa Teertha, Gurusvami Śāstrigaḷ opines that he must have lived between 1650 and 1750 and three sources have been cited:

NT, in his 'Subŏdhinee' has mentioned some verses from 'Ratnaprabhā' of Rāmānanda Svāmi, who lived in the earlier part of the 17th century.

'Pārijātāpaharańam'—the invocation is addressed to 'Achyutapuranivāsa Svāmi Varadarāja'. Achyutapuram is another name for Melattūr, since it was a gift (as is said) to the Bhāgavatas of that village, by King Achyutappa Nāyaka of Tanjavur. It is so considered by many and I shall revert to this subject later.

The author of "Panchakrŏśa Manjari" mentions himself as the disciple of NT. Now, let us discuss these.

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'Ratnaprabhā' of Rāmānanda is believed to have been composed before 1650 and no wonder, Teertha has quoted some verses from that work, probably, few years earlier to him.

'Pārijātāpaharaṅam' is a dance-drama in Telugu, for enactment by the Bhāgavata mėḷa artistes of Melattūr. There are many Yakshagānas in Telugu, with the same title. There is one by King Raghunātha Nāyaka and another by his illustrious son, King Vijayarāghava Nāyaka. Also one in Sanskrit is there. But, T.S. Parthasarathi considers that the one in Telugu, said to have been written by Teertha, does not appear to be the work of the author of SKLT. It is not known, on what grounds, he came to such a conclusion. A careful and thorough study of this Telugu work, of which only a fragment is now available and published in the Journal of the Sarasvati Mahal library, dispels any doubt and makes certain that it is only of N.Teertha. The poetic style and types of musical compositions, Vachanas and so on, found therein are similar to other dance-dramas, now extant, in all probability, followed after Teertha.

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In this context, it would not be inappropriate to say a word about the name, 'Achyutapuram'. Gurusvami Śāstrigaḷ, Dr. Rajanikānta Rao and such others have written that the village, Melattūr acquired the name 'Achyutapuram', being a royal grant of King Achyutappa Nāyaka. Dr. Rajanikānta Rao, in his work on 'Kshėtrayya' has stated that this king gifted the entire village to accommodate 510 brahmin families for the purpose of promoting art and thus the village came to be called Achyutapuram, after the liberal-minded donor. B. Natarajan, almost faithfully, has followed Dr. Rajani or some such others in saying, " the Āndhra sampradāya of Kūchipuḍi in the Krshńā region was brought to Melattūr in the Kāvėri region of Tamilnadu by Achyutappa Nāyaka, when he settled nearly 510 Andhra Brahmin families, in the township, Achyutapuram". At another place, he says "Telugu families' movement to the Tanjore region should have occurred between 1532 and 1700". Achyutappa's ruling period was 1561 to 1614. Hence, according to Natarajan himself, the Telugu Brahmins must have moved over to the Kāvėri region, about 29 years earlier to the King.

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Inscriptions tell us that even during the second visit of King Achyutarāya of Vijayanagar and his queen, Tirumalāmbā to Śrirangam (1530), there were already a number of Āndhra Brahmin families, many being artistes, in the Kāvėri region.

Since the Chola empire extended upto Nellore, during the times of Parāntaka I (907/955), Rājarāja I invaded the Vėngi region in 990 or a little earlier. Vimalāditya, who married the daughter of Rājarāja I, ascended the throne in Vėngi on 10.5.1011. Ananta Śambhu's gloss to 'Siddhānta Sārāvaḷi' of Trilőchana Śivāchārya, mentions that when Rājėndra I invaded the Gangā (Ganges) region, he imported many Brahmins from the banks of Ganges and such other places, en route, into his kingdom. Many such historical events make us rest assured that many Āndhraites from the Vėngi and its nearby Telugu regions came to Tanjavur and the adjacent districts and settled down there. We also understand from inscriptions that some areas in the Chőlamańđalam and Tońđaimańđalam were given as 'Nāyakka tānam' (gift to the Nāyakas) during the times of Krshńadėvarāya and many

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Telugu people had already settled down in these parts. Even very ancient literature on music and dance mentions the word 'Vaḍugu', which indicates only Telugu and the people with Telugu as their mother-tongue, which is still in currency. There is no evidence at all to assert that Telugu Brahmins moved over to the Kāvėri region and introduced the art of Kūchipuḍi dancing. Dr. P.S.R. Appā Rao, in his 'Āndhra Yakshagānamu' clearly states that two young Brahmins from the Krshńā district came to Melaṯṯūr and, after witnessing the Bhāgavata mėḷa nāṯakas, they took the art to their native village and introduced it as Kūchipuḍi. Natarajan also adds, perhaps his own fanciful theory that 'Melaṯṯūr' derived the name from the Telugu word, 'Mėḷa Puttūru', meaning 'a village of dance troupes'. At some places, the letter 'r' (Meraṯṯūr) is also used, instead of ' l ', or more correctly 'Milaṯṯūr'. He is very knowledgeable and the son of a great historian, but, maybe, due to oversight, this error. In the inscriptions of King Rājarāja I, the village has been mentioned as "Nittavinőda

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Vaḷanāttup perum kūtrattup peru Milattūr". So Melattūr is not a name derived from 'Mėḷa Puttūru' or 'Mėḷattu ūru'.

Some others contend that not only Milattūŕ, but some other villages like Sāliyamangalam, Śūlamangalam etc. where Bhāgavata mėḷa was regularly performed were also, as a whole, called 'Achyutapuram' or 'Achyutābdhi'. It is true that we find the usage 'Achyutapura' in many compositions of N.Teertha, Milattūr Veerabhadrayya, Venkatarāma Śāstri and such others. But, surprisingly, not even a single recorded evidence is available to argue that Achyutapuram was a gift from King Achyutarāya of Vijayanagar or from King Achyutappa Nāyaka of Tanjavur. No one has so far given any documentary evidence to ascertain the cause of the name of the village. While there are records to speak about some other places like 'Achyutappa Samudram', 'Achyutamangalam', 'Achyuta Vijayarāghavapuram' and so on (for more details, please refer to the work, "Tanjāvūr Nāyakkar Varalāŕu" of Kudavoyil M. Balasubramanian), it is not so in the case of Achyutapuram!

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N.Teertha is said to have had some disciples. Since disciples of any worthy guru are like different fragrant flowers in a bouquet, each would have something unique to contribute to the guru's mission. The different disciples of great merit, naturally embody various characteristics of the many-sided guru. Brahmānanda Sarasvati, in his 'Laghu Chandrikā' gives the name of N.Teertha, as his guru:--

Śree Nārāyaṅa Teerthānām guruṅām charaṅa smrti:

Śree Nārāyaṅa Teerthānām shaṭśāstree pārameeyushām charaṅau....

Brahmānanda Sarasvati has written Advaitic works like 'Laghu Chandrikā', 'Guru Chandrikā' (commentary on 'Advaita Siddhi' of Śree Madhusūdana Sarasvati, mentioned earlier), 'Advaita Siddhānta Vidyőtanam' and some more.

While speaking about Teertha, Svāmi Śivaśankara Śāstrigaḷ has stated that N.Teertha marked his commentaries with the insignia, 'Chandrikā', though this may not be taken as correct, since we do

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not have all his works with this word. Śankarānanda Bhārati, in his 'Panchakrőśa Manjari', a w
Vārańāśi, claims his discipleship under N.Teertha. He pays his obeisance to his guru at many
Tam naumi Nārāyańa Teertham āryam…dėśikam Śivam Śiva Nārāyańa Teerthaśėkharam (Guru Vand
Śiva Nārāyańa Teertha sėvaka (Bhajė Viśvėśam); *Śiva Nārāyańa guruvara* (Viśvapatė); *Ānanda Śiva*
Nārāyańānanda sėvaka (Jaya Jaya); *Natana vinőda Śree Nārāyańa Teertha* (Śree Viśvanātha); *Śree*
Nārāyańānanda (Gangė Paripāhi); *Śiva Nārāyańānanda Teertha dėśikavara* (Rāmanātha); *Sundara*
Nārāyańānandam Āśrayė (Manda Vrshabha); *Śiva Nārāyańa teerthavarya sėvaka* (Jaya Viśvėśa); *Śiv*
Nārāyańa Teertha sėvaka (Jaya Dėvi Mańikarńikė). Thus goes on the mudras. Scholaras, who m
indepth study of this work, arrived at the conclusion that Śankarānanda Bhārati must have li
between 1660 and 1750 and the guru, as is natural, would have been older than the disciple,
twenty years. Natarajan says that the manuscript of this 'Panchakrőśa Manjari' was in the po

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of King Tulaja I (1728/1736). Why alone in his possession? Like many other manuscripts, this also might have been collected and safely preserved in the Sarasvati Bhandara, by some earlier king.

Nőri Narasimha Śāstri states that the order of sanyāsa is necessarily added to the initiated name (Deekshānāma) of any saint, to denote the 'sampradaya' to which the ascetic belongs and three such orders—Sarasvati, Bhārati and Teertha—are commonly prevalent. Here, the guru is a 'Teertha', while one śishya is a 'Sarasvati' and another 'Bhārati', suggesting that they differed in the type of monastic order or in the usage of the monastic suffixes. Mahėśa Teertha is another one, said to be the disciple of Teertha. He, in his 'Rāmāyaṅa' has stated '*Praṅamya Nārāyaṅa Teertha dėśikam*', though we are not sure, whether he was really a disciple of our N.Teertha.

Dr.V. Raghavan considered N.Teertha's period as between 1600 and 1765. T.S. Parthasarathi has written that Teertha was born in 1675, while Dr. B. Rajanikānta Rao gives the years of birth and death of Teertha as 1580 and 1700 respectively (120 years of life!). Kudavoyil Balasubramanian

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states that Teertha took to eternal rest on 28.2.1645. Many others including B. Natarajan have suggested Teertha's period as either 1675 to 1745 or 1650 to 1740. But all these are simply conjectures, based on no authentic evidence.

A bronze icon of Lord Krshńa, in a dancing posture, with a saint's figure at its base, was excavated a few years back in Krishńāpuram, a hamlet near Varahūr. It is now kept in Ranganāthapuram, another village, a few kilometers away from Varahūr. Iconologists and Archaeologists, on a thorough inspection, arrived at the conclusion that this icon belonged to the period of King Vijayarāghava Nāyaka (1633/1675). B. Natarajan considers that the line between the Nāyaka period and the Marathā period at Tanjavur has been so thin, that this icon would have been a product in the early stage of the Marathā rule. True. Vijayarāghava Nāyaka, who ruled for 42 years before the Marathās, was assassinated on 3.2.1675 and the Marathā king, Ēkŏji became the ruler on 17.3.1675. But the conclusion of the iconologists and archaeologists that the icon belonged to Vijayarāghava's

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time, cannot be dismissed offhand. Further, the style and type, as also, the method of casting metals and alloys, differ from period to period. The saint's figure with a tonsured head and a 'daṅḍa' (staff) in hand clearly suggests that it is of N.Teertha, that too, unearthed from a village closer to Varahūr. It must be also kept in mind that no other saint propagated the Krshṅā cult in that area, in the 17th century. From all this, we may safely fix the period of N.Teertha, as between 1600 and 1700 and more possibly, he must have been a contemporary of King Vijayarāghava Nāyaka, Saint Śree Rāghavėndra and Kshėtrayya, the renowned Pada composer.

With regard to the region of Teertha's birth, as Andhra Pradėsh and his abode in the Kāvėri region of Tamilnadu, there is not much difference of opinion among scholars (except in a stray case). But a confusion persists about the exact place of his birth and more gijantically regarding the place of his 'siddhi'. When we have no authentic evidence, such a confusion and self-foisted conjectures could not be avoided, particularly when confronted with names such as Nārāyaṅa Teertha, Teertha

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Nārāyaṅa, Nārāyaṅānanda Guru and so on. There were many with the name, Nārāyaṅa Teertha, at different periods of history. The Adayar library catalogue gives the name of a N.Teertha of Gővindapuram, who was the author of works like '*Śabda Manjari*' and '*Śabda Bhūshaṅam*'. Though the author's name is given as N.Teertha in the catalogue, his real name was Nārāyaṅa Sudhee and a contemporary of King Shāhji II (1684/1712). Let us now see, in concise, what all have been said by various people about the life of N.Teertha.

Subbarāma Deekshitar of Ettayapuram makes a short reference to Teertha, in his '*Sangeeta Sampradāya Pradarśini*' (Vāggėyakāra Charitam), as one, who came down from 'Uttara Dėśa'! He has made the same ambiguous statement in the case of 'Melattoor' Veerabhadrayya too. Which is 'Uttara Dėśa' (the northern country)? For a Tanjāvurian, even Tiruvaiyāřu (about 10 kilometeres away) is 'Uttara Dėśa' and for one of Ettayapuram, Tanjavur is 'Uttara Dėśa'. Even today, people in Karnataka use the word 'Dakshińādi' to indicate the Chőladėśa. Some records in the Sarasvati Mahal

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library speak about "two Brahmin boys from Bellary in the Uttara Dėśa", who came to Tanjavur to learn music. Even within Karnataka, the northern districts of that state, are identified as 'Uttara Dėśa'. When one saint from the Northern Karnataka, by name, Vidyānidhi Teertha, became the Pontiff of a branch mutt of Śree Madhva, in 1444; his co-disciple, Vibhudėndra Teertha, revolted against. He, with his own disciples and supporters established another Mutt. A divide couldn't be avoided and there became two individual mutts, with the one headed by Vidyānidhi Teertha came to be known as 'Uttarādi Mutt', since he was 'Uttarādi'! As such, the statement of Subbarama Deekshitar only confuses.

Svāmi Śivaśankara Śāstri was one, who claimed to be the great-great-great grandson of N.Teertha's younger brother. His genealogy, as given by B.Natarajan, based on Śāstri's version is given here in short:--

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Gővinda Śāstri's (Pūrvāśrama name of N. Teertha) younger brother's (name not given) son was Narasimha Śāstri—(son) Rājagőpāla Śāstri—(son) Raghunandana Śāstri –(son) Rukmińeeśvara Śāstri—(son) Gangādhara Śāstri—(son) Krshńa Śāstri—(sons) (1) Gangādhara Śāstri and (2) Śivaśankara Śāstri.

We are not sure whether Gővinda Śāstri had any brother or not. At present, let us admit the claim of Śivaśankara Śāstri. According to him, N.Teertha was born in a village, Kāzā, near Guntūr in Āndhra Pradėsh (this statement is faithfully followed by others); studied the scriptures under Vāsudėva Paṅḍita and ordained to sanyāsa at Kāncheepuram by Rāma Gővinda Teertha and went to Kāśi. Śivaśankara Śāstri's view that Rāma Gővinda Teertha and Śivarāma Teertha were one, has been disregarded by Dr.V. Raghavan. After sometime, N.Teertha returned to his native place and spent his final phase of his life in Tamilnadu, visiting Melattūr and Varahūr and finally, he entered

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the samādhi at Tiruppūnturutti (which again is also more faithfully followed by others and propagated till this day).

Svāmināṭha Ātrėyan says (without indicating any source) that when in his youth, Teertha was forced to marry a girl from the place, called Vėdādri, on the northern banks of the river, Krshṅā. Teertha mentions this place, Vėdādri, the abode of Lord Narasimha (*Vėdādrisimha tvām naumi*—11:46). Vėṭūri Prabhākara Śāstri explains that Narasimha kshėtras in Āndhra Pradėsh, wherever they are, appear to go by the name, Vėdādri and Dr. Rajanikānta Rao concedes to this. Āchammā (or Uchmmā) is said to be the name of Gővinda Śāstri's wife, according to Nőri Narasimha Śāstri. Some others consider that after composing and presenting SKLT at Varahūr, the saint returned to Āndhra Pradėsh, taught the opera to some of his disciples there and attained eternal rest, not known where and when.

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A very funny story has been given by Prof. P. Sambamurthi. He says that N.Teertha belonged only to Tanjavur district. Gangādhara and Pārvati were his parents. His father-in-law's house was located on the other side of the river, Veṅṅār. While once the river was in spate, Teertha tried to swim across, but his life was in danger. So he took 'Āpatsanyāsa'. Later he went to Muktyāla and Challapalli samsthānams in Āndhra Pradesh. Affected by acute and incessant stomach pain, he went to Tirupati and as directed by the Lord of the Seven Hills, he proceeded to the Kāvėri region and stayed in Naḍukkāvėri village. As instructed by a divine voice, he got the sight of a boar, when he woke up and followed it. He reached Varahūr, lived there for two or three years and finally entered into samādhi at Tiruppūnturutti. A good fiction indeed! It is not known, on the basis of which evidence, the Professor stated that Teertha belonged to Tanjavur district with other narrated details. After taking 'sanyāsa' in the floods of Veṅṅār, why should Teertha go only to Muktyāla and Challapalli, leaving any other place or samsthānam? Where was his father-in-law's house "on the

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other side of" the river? The river, Veṅṅār, has a long run, beginning from the Grand Anaicut and ending in the sea, having hundreds of villages on its both banks. Why the exact name of the village could not be pin-pointed? This story reminds us of the Professor's identification of a house at Tiruvārūr, in which Śree Tyāgarāja is alleged to have been born!

Gurusvāmi Śāstrigaḷ in the appendix to his '*Śreemad Varāhapura Śree Venkatėśa Suprabhātam*' (and allied hymns) given Kāzā, near Guṅtūr, as the birthplace of Teertha. Dr. Dhara Rāmanātha Śāstri also says the same with the addition that the saint's samādhi is at Tiruppūnturutti. Dr. Rajanikānta Rao feels that Teertha must have gone to the South before 1614, i.e at about the age of 34 and he must have lived for some time in Śreekākuḷam (AP), since suggested by the line, '*Śreekākuḷanagaree*' in SKLT (10th Taranga), whereas the version found in '*Venkatėśapriyā*' of Varahūr Gurusvāmi Śāstrigaḷ is "*Sreekarakőlanagaree Śree Bhūmisahitam*". Śāstrigaḷ explains that the word, *Śreekarakula* has been changed by him as *Śreekarakőla*, for correct rendering. Further, *Śreekarakőlanagaree* has been translated

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as 'Varāhapuri'. According to another school of thought, Teertha came to the Tanjavur region around 1701 and lived in Gővindapuram, Tiruviśanallūr, Melaṯṯūr etc. till about 1740.

There are two important biographical sketches in a single work, entitled, *Ēńippaḏigaḷil Māndargaḷ* (Tamil), by Śivan Svamigaḷ. These two narrate about N. Teertha and Ananta Padmanābha Teertha Nārāyaṅa, respectively. A translated excerpt (from page 472) of the work is given below:--

N.Teertha was born in Veḷḷattūr, a village in Āndhra Pradėsh. On the completion of Vedic studies, the boy's parents got him married. While once crossing a flooded river, he took 'āpatsanyāsa' and set out, renouncing worldly life. On the way he met an old man and prayed him to bless to get the grace of Lord Krshńā. The other person directed him to go south and meet Saint Bődhėndra, on the banks of the river, Kāvėri. During the sojourn, Teertha was accosted by an young boy, who was none other Krshńā. At that time, Teertha was suffering from severe stomach pain. The boy asked, "Shall I put my hand on your belly, so that your pain will disappear?" But N.Teertha prayed,

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"Instead, you place your hand on my head and bless, because I can bear the physical pain". So did the boy (Lord) and disappeared. When Teertha reached Gővindapuram, he came to know that Saint Bődhėndra had attained siddhi, only few months before. Moving down south, Teertha had a brief stay at Kańđiyūr, where his pain shot up unbearably. He got a divine command to follow whatever he saw first at the dawn. It happened to be a pig, which started to run, Teertha following it. At Varahūr, the pig entered the temple only to disappear. The stupefied Teertha again heard a divine voice, "Only I brought you here; don't search for me and stay here". Because of this incident, the village came to be known as 'Varāhapuri' (which later, colloquially became Varahūr). There he composed SKLT and presented it, while behind the curtain in the Sanctum Sanctorum, Krshńā used to dance with jingling anklets. Finally, Lord Krshńā took Teertha to His own abode. The place of his samādhi at Varahūr was soon forgotten.

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The second story in the same work (Pages 560 to 590) is about another saint. A translated extract:-

At the beginning of the 18th century, a Brahmin, by name, Gangādhara was living with his wife, Mangaḷāmbikā, in the village, Giridurgam, 'in the North'. By the grace of Lord Śiva, they got a male child, which they christened as 'Ananta Padmanābha'. At the proper age, the boy got married. After begetting children, he undertook a pilgrimage to Kāśi. In Pūri, the Lord blessed him with the words, "O Padmanābha! The stőtras that pour out of your tongue resemble the 'Teertha Pravāha' (Water Gush) and You shall henceforth be called 'Teertha Nārāyaṅa'."...Later he went to Kanjanūr (Tanjavur District) with a desire to meet Haradatta Śivāchārya. The latter felt glad and blessed him, "Teertha Nārāyaṅa! You have been graced by Lord Subrahmaṅya and you are going to be the form of 'Sacchidānanda'.." [Haradatta Śivāchārya, according to K.A. Nilakanta Śāstri, passed away in 1119 !].Sometime after, Teertha Nārāyaṅa went to Tirumazhapāḍi, on the banks of the river, Koḷḷiḍam

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and stayed there. One Panchanadam of Tiruvaiyāřu, became his devotee. One day T. Nārāyaṅa told this Panchanadam, "I shall move over to Pushpavanam (the present Tiruppūnturutti) on the 257th day from now. It is enough if you come there and meet me next". On the said day, the guru reached Tiruppūnturutti, where he had performed a number of miracles, by way of doing good to the suffering people. King Tuḷajā was ruling Tanjavur and his queen was ailing from a carbuncle. When the king and the queen met the saint, he cured her. As a token of gratitude, the king gifted 4 Vėlis (about 25 acres) of land to the saint. There Teertha Nārāyaṅa lived till his end. A goat, which was brought to life from death by the saint, long before, was roaming always with him like a companion. When Teertha N. decided to enter into samādhi, even while living, he directed his disciple, Panchanadam, to arrange for the same. Gupta Śivan, another disciple of the saint, on hearing the news rushed to the place. Just before the saint's entry into the grave, the pet goat placed its head at the holy feet of Teertha Nārāyaṅa. He comforted it with the words, "If so, be here always in the

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form of a bull in my presence". The goat, at once, turned into a stone bull. The saint then stepped down inside the grave. Panchanada ŚāstrigaL and Gupta Śivan, as already instructed by their guru, closed the grave with stone slabs. This is the story.

There is yet another work, that elucidates exclusively about this Teertha Nārāyaṅa, entitled "*Tiruppūnturutti Śree Ananta Padmanābha Nārāyaṅa Gurusvāmigaḷ Charittiram*" (Tamil). Authored by Tiruvaiyāṟu Gaṅēśa Śrautigaḷ, the work is in the form of a 'story-telling' by Śiva Ananta Nārāyaṅa to Ananta Vaidyanātha. In 1938, this work was published by Gurusvāmi Śāstrigaḷ, son of Gaṅēśa Śrautigaḷ. They belong to the disciple-lineage of Teertha Nārāyaṅa. A condensed and translated portion follows:--

Gangādhara Śāstrigaḷ of Giridurgam, on the banks of the river, Ganges, belonged to the Kāśyapa gőtra. His son, Ananta Padmanābha, got married to Suśeelā, daughter of Śankara Śāstrigaḷ of Swarṅapuri, a nearby village. This couple, in due course, got a son (Sucharitra) and a daughter

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(Kānti). Ananta Padmanābha set out on a pilgrimage and at Pūri, Lord Krshńā's divine voice said, "Your are like a flood of water; according to your wish, you shall meet a worthy guru and get initiated; also shall you acquire my name, Nārāyańa and be known as 'Teertha Nārāyańa'; by the grace of your guru, you shall bring prosperity to all, who seek you". Thereafter, Ananta Padmanābha went to the holy place, Subrahmańya and the lord pleased by his prayer, directed him, through divine voice, that he could meet Śivachitparānanda, seated under a Bilva tree in Vārāńaśi, similarly like Lord Dakshińāmūrthi, who would initiate him.

In the village, Kanjanūr, east of Tanjavur, there lived a staunch Vaishńavaite, by name, Vāsudėvāchārya and his son, Sudarśana was contrastingly a great devotee of Lord Śiva. When the local elders rebuked the boy, he performed a miracle, by divine grace—He took a challenge thrown on him and being seated on a red-hot iron plate, he uttered thrice that Śiva is great. He was then revered by one and all and earned the name, Haradatta Śivāchārya. Few years later, he initiated his

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nephew, named him 'Śivajnyānabődha' and resorted to Mount Kailas. One Subrahmana Śāstrigaḷ came to Sivajnyānabődha and prayed to take him as a disciple. This Subrahmańya, after few years, got ordained with the 'Deekshānāma'—Śivachitparānanda. Later he moved over to Kāśi and spent most of the time in meditating on Lord Viśvėśvara. Ananta Padmanābha, having gone to Kāśi and becoming the disciple of Śivachitparānanda, got instructed many mantras and also came to be called Ananta Padmanābha Nārāyańa. To worship the image of Haradatta (his Paramaguru) at Kanjanūr, he proceeded to that place, while on his way, performing miracles, whenever needed. At Kanjanūr, Kuppu, a poor Brahmin of Tanjavur and son of Krshńa Śāstrigaḷ, became the disciple of Ananta Padmanābha and came to be known as 'Gupta Śivan'. The guru later went to Tirumazhapāđi, stayed there for a considerable period and then moved over to Pushpavanam (Tiruppūnturutti). He cured the carbuncle of King Tulajā's queen and the king gifted 4 Velis of land. Teertha Nārāyańa, as he came to be popularly known, told one of his disciples, Teertham Panchanada Śāstri that he had

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decided to take to samādhi, next year, in the month of Māśi, onThursady-Śukla Ashtami, with the star, Kruttika. On the fixed day, Teertha Nārāyaṅa entered into the samādhi, in the presence of his disciples and the public. Here ends the story given by Gaṅėśa Śrautigaḷ. He also gives (page 82) the monastic lineage or guru Paramparā:--

Name	Original Name	Place
Haradatta Śivāchārya	Sudarśana	Kanjanūr
Śivajnyānabődha		Kanjanūr
Śivachitparānanda	Subrahmaṅyam	Tiruvidaimarudūr
Ananta Padmanābha Teertha Nārāyaṅa	Ananta Padmanābha	Giridurgam
Gupta Śivan	Kuppu	Tanjavur
Śiva Panchanadeeśvara	Panchanadam	Tiruvaiyāřu

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Śiva Ananta Nārāyaṅa	Sthāṅu	Kacchukkaṯṯu
Ananta Vaidyanātha	Vaidyanātha	Kacchukkaṯṯu
Śivarāma Subrahmaṅya	Subrahmaṅyam	Kacchukkaṯṯu
Śiva Panchanadeeśvara	Svāmināṯha Śāstrigaḷ	Tiruvaiyāṙu
Śiva Nārāyaṅa	Gaṅeśa Śrautigaḷ	--do—
Gurusvāmi	Gurusvāmi Śrautigaḷ	--do—

The lineage chart has probably been extended by Gurusvāmi Śrautigaḷ, upto the time of the work's publication in 1938. Śivan Svāmigaḷ's narration is more or less the same. He gives N. Teertha's birthplace as Veḷḷattūr and that Saint Bődhėndra attained 'siddhi' some months before the arrival of Teertha at Gővindapuram. According to the records of Kānchi Kāmakőṯi mutt, Bődhėndra's period was 1638 to 1692. If we take the statement of Śivan Svāmigaḷ for granted,

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N.Teertha must have come to Tamilnadu in about 1692 or he might have migrated earlier but visited Gővindapuram only in that year. The icon unearthed in Krshńāpuram and the above statement make us to safely arrive at the conclusion that N.Teertha must have lived in the Tanjavur region, during the final phase of Nāyaks' rule.

Now we enter into a moot and mostly confusing segment. It is about the end of N.Teertha and the place of his 'samādhi'.

Almost all the scholars are of the opinion that the saint took to eternal rest at Tiruppūnturutti, though none has placed before any solid and valid evidence to the effect. Śivan Svāmigaḷ avers, "Nārāyaṅa Teertha didn't enter the samādhi at Tiruppūnturuti, as wrongly believed by some". Tiruppūnturutti is about a mile westward from Kaṅđiyūr (on the Tanjavur-Tiruvaiyāřu main road) and just three miles ahead of this village is situated Varahūr. Śivan Svāmigaḷ @ Sadāśiva Śāstri, a (Pūrvāśrama) younger brother of H.H. Śree Chandraśėkharėndra Sarasvati Svāmigaḷ (the

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Mahā Periyavāḷ) of Kānchi Mutt, was very knowledgeable. He emphatically observes that N.Teertha took samādhi at Varahūr and the saint enshrined at Tiruppūnturutti was only Ananta Padmanābha Teertha Nārāyaṅa. This concurs with Ganėśa Śrautigaḷ. The latter in his 'Guru Paramparā' chart gives against Ananta Padmanābha Ṭeertha Nārāyaṅa, Tiruppūnturutti as the place where he attained eternal rest. The same has been said in Śivan Svāmigaḷ's "*Deiveekamum Ātmeekamum*". Let us see another work, "*Tiruppūnturutti Śree Nārāyaṅa teerthāḷ charittiram*", written by Tiruppūnturutti T. Ariyanāka Mudaliar. He writes:-- "Our saint was initiated by Śree Śankara Nārāyaṅa Teertha Svāmigaḷ; Five persons, including N.Teertha got 'upadėśa' at Tiruviḍaimarudūr, the other four were Bődhėndra (Gővindapuram), Ayyāvāḷ (Tiruviśanallūr), Sadāśiva Brahmam (Nerūr) and Sőmasundaram Chettiār (Mysore). N. Teertha went to Tiruvaiyāřu, Viḷānguḍi, Tirumazhapāḍi, Naḍukkāvėri and then following the boar to Varahūr. Finally he came to Tiruppūnturutti; he cured the dracontiasis in the hand of King Amarasimha; entered samādhi; the

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daily pūja was performed there by Namaśivāyam, then by Ambalavāṅa, both sons of Toṅḍaimaṅḍalam Ponnappa Mudaliar....." Śivan Svāmigaḷ writes that N.Teertha came to Gŏvindapuram, with a desire to meet Saint Bŏdhėndra, but the latter had passed away few months earlier. Ariyanāyaka Mudaliar, curiously, makes Teertha and Bŏdhėndra as 'co-disciples'! But, one step further and in a most funniest manner, Dr. V.R.S. Chalapati Rao has stated that Bŏdhėndra himself was a disciple of N.Teertha!! This appears to be a good joke.

Many, who endeavour in narrating the life-sketches of great personages, do not have even an iota of chronological sense. They very easily fall prey to hearsays and most of them never exert themselves to verify any statement or to collect and collate substantial evidence, at least to the possible extent. Myth and fancy carry them away than Truth and Authenticity. Ariyanāyaka Mudaliar says, (1) N. Teertha was initiated by one Śankara Nārāyaṅa Teertha and (2) Teertha cured Amarasimha. It has to be established (after thorough investigation) whether any

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Śankaranārāyaṅa Teertha ever existed, leave alone his initiation to Teertha. Similarly, no available records tell us either Tulaja's queen or Amarasimha suffered ever by any disease. The contemporaenity of N. Teertha with Tulaja and Amarasimha, cannot be questioned, if the above accounts of Śivan Svāmigaḷ or others are taken to be facts. If Teertha was a contemporary of these Marathā rulers, how could he have been a contemporary of Bődhėndra, who rose to heavens in 1692? The opinion of most of the scholars that Teertha must have lived in the last phase of Nāyaks' rule seems to be more plausible. The saint about whom Mudaliar mentioned must have been Ananta Padmanābha Teertha Nārāyaṅa. The regular pūjas in the samādhi are performed, even today, by priests, who are not brahmins. Dr. V. Raghavan also states, "the village sanctified by his samādhi is at Tiruppūnturutti". It is not known how such a great scholar arrived at this conclusion and on what evidence. Kurugaṅti Seetārāma Rao has given the year 1745, when N.Teertha entered 'Jeevasamādhi' at 'Tiruppūnturutti'. How was he so sure about the year or the place?

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H.H. the Paramāchārya of Kānchi Mutt, in his 'Śreemukham' (1944) to the Telugu edition of SKLT (published in 1948) transcribed and translated by Raja Venkaṭādri Appā Rao, Zamindar of Vuyyūr, has mentioned "it is simply said that N. Teertha has entered the samādhi at Tiruppūnturutti". It makes clear that the holiness had himself doubted the general statement. Everyone knows that the Paramāchārya was a 'Trikālajṅyāni'. Known fully the truth, the sage perhaps might not have wished to usher in any controversy in the matter; Or, he might have thought, if not the people of Varahūr, at least those of Tiruppūnturutti cherish and remember the great soul.

Generally, no Vishńu temple nor the samādhi of a devotee of Vishńu, would have the image of a bull in front of the Sanctum Sanctorum. N.Teertha, though or a true Advaitin, was a great devotee of Krshńa, a form of Vishńu. He addresses himself as '*Vishńubhakta Nārāyańa Teertha*' and '*Śree Haribhakta Nārāyańa Teertha*'. If the Samadhi at Tiruppūnturutti is that of his, an explanation is

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warranted, as regards the image of a bull in the sannidhi. Some say that it is only of Teertha Nārāyaṅa, blessed by Lord Subrahmaṅya and hence the placement of the bull is justified. If so, a peacock would be more appropriate.

'*Śikyőtsava Prabandham*' of Varahūr Nārāyaṅa Kavi (1868/1935) contains two important verses, relevant to the present discussion, in its first chapter. The first one is:-- "*Kavėrakanyā paripūta pārśvė—Śree Pushpavāteeśvara vāsa dhanyė—grāmė sa Nārāyaṅa Teerthanāma yati: prapėdė hi vikuṅthaloőkam*| | (Ślőka 93). " In the village, situated on the sanctified banks of Kāvėri and which has the greatness of a temple for Pushpavāteeśvara, the saint, by name, Nārāyaṅa Teertha, attained Vaikuṅtha". This ślőka informs that Teertha reached the nether worlds from Tiruppūnturutti. B. Natarajan, in his work (Page 89) has quoted verses 72 to 93 of the work of Nārāyaṅa Kavi, with translation and has commented that this Kavi "has borne unambiguous testimony in his book to the samādhi of N. Teertha, being at Tiruppūnturutti". But, for some reason best known to himself, Natarajan has

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omitted the very next ślőka. It runs as:--*Varāha darśitādhvanā hi bhūsurőttama : sa yaddheeram prapannavatsalam dharāsurāgrahāram| prapadya muktim āyayau purā tatā: parabhrtyabhūd Varāhapattańābhidhā dharāmaraugha vėśmanām| |* (Sl.94) "The great Brahmin followed the path, shown by the boar, reached the village, the habitat of brahmins and where (Śree Venkatėśa) the lover of devotees, abides in the temple, worshipped and attained 'mukti' there; from that day, the village came to be known as Varāhapattańam". Here 'bhūsurőttama' (the best brahmin) has been used and not N. Teertha or Yati. But none other than the saint, followed the boar to Varahūr, which is vouchsafed by all alike. This verse clearly proclaims that N.Teertha attained liberation (Mukti) only in Varahūr. The word 'Mukti' in Sanskrit has many meanings: release, Deliverence, Liberation, giving up, discharged and so on. In the case of Teertha, 'Mukti' in the ślőka may mean either 'liberation' or 'deliverence'. Deliverence from what? The stomach ache? But this has not been clearly mentioned by the poet. So, any argument that the deliverance is from the stomach-ache becomes untenable. At

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the same time, why should two consecutive verses by the same author state contrary to each other? Is this not ambiguity? Only the poet knows about his intention. When it is generally believed, based on the writings of many, that N.Teertha had an acute and intolerable stomach pain, which vanished when he reached the Varahūr temple, Nārāyaṅa Kavi (in ślőka 72 of the same work) says that Teertha suffered from some heart disease (*Hrdrőga*)! Another instance of ambiguity.

It would be only far-fetched to say that N. Teertha lived and attained mukti at Varahūr, while his mortal remains were interred in at Tiruppūnturutti. Saint Śree Sadāśiva Brahmėndra is believed to have entered 'Jeevasamādhi', simultaneously at different places like Nerūr, Mānāmadurai and so on. Could N. Teertha also have performed that feat? We do not know. No scholar is of the view that N.Teertha's samādhi is at both places—Varahūr and Tiruppūnturutti.

N. Teertha, because of his short stay at Melattūr, has sung some songs in praise of the presiding deity of that place; similarly had he done at Varahūr. Why not we get even a single song or verse on

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Lord Pushpavāteeśvara of Tiruppūnturutti? It must be borne in mind that N. Teertha was an advaitin and he would never have had any antagony towards Pushpavāteeśvara. The second question, we face, is what prevailed upon him to leave Varahūr (or any other village) and move over to Tiruppūnturutti, a Śivasthala? Likewise, not even the mention of this place is found in any of his works, be they Vedāntic or operas!

Gurusvāmi Śāstrigaḷ, in his Preface to '*Venkaṭēśapriyā*' mentions that there were many Nārāyaṅa Teerthas in the 17th and 18th centuries. Naturally this may be another cause for the confusion. When scholars themselves do not delve deep into the matter investigatively, how could laymen be expected to do so? People of the later days, blindly believed what had been written and propagated all along and started to join in the chorus that the samādhi at Tiruppūnturutti is that of N. Teertha. Falsity, when tirelessly repeated again and again, whether intentionally or unintentionally, start to visualize as the blatant truth; sometimes it transforms as Truth itself. So, all stories about the samādhi are based

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purely upon legends and oral tradition. Facts are always bitter. It must also be admitted that we are endowed with a great amount of 'adamancy'. Because of its supreme influence, we do not have an inclination to have an 'open mind' to either accept the truth, nor do we exert to probe into reality.

There is a Śiva temple at Varahūr, which village had the original name, 'Bhūpatirājapuram' (*Bhūpatirājapurasya Varāhapuranāma prāpti kālāvanarśanādeenām vigjynāyatè*) and came to be known as Varāhapura after the boar incident. Generally, Śiva temples should be in the eastern end of the 'agrahāra' (Brahmin habitat). The very word 'Agrahāra' arose from the dictum '*Agrè Hāra: iti Agrahāra:*' (Śiva in the east). But this Śiva temple is not located in that direction or according to the specifications given by the science of architecture. It has no 'Dhvajasthambha' (flag-mast). In any Śiva temple, the linga (the phallic form of the deity) will find a place only on a square or circular single stone, in accordance with the rules of architecture. But, in Varahūr, the 'linga' is placed on two horizontal stones. Generally to keep two horizontal stones, close to each other (fit to be removed or

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opened whenever necessary) is a custom in the case only of 'adhishtānams' (samādhis). In some such samādhis, the priest, on the ārādhana day, used to go down upto certain depth to perform pūja. The samādhi of Śree Dakshińāmūrthi Svāmigaḷ at Maḍappuram, Tiruvārūr is a good example. The 'linga' at Varahūr is, as already stated, kept above the two horizontal stones. According to the structural findings and the version of the temple priest, it becomes known that formerly a roof was there, only for the 'mūlasthāna' (Sanctum) and a small mańḍapa and some other walls are later constructions. From all this, it is clear that it was not originally built as or meant to be a Śiva temple. The priest, as well as, some old people of that village raise the doubt, whether this could be the samādhi of N. Teertha, about which the older generations had forgotten, long before. Even if the place is admitted as a samādhi, how could we decide that it is of N. Teertha? The mortal remains of some other saint might have been interred in that grave. But, we do not come across the name of any saint, other than N.Teertha, who lived and said to have attained mukti there.

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When the British established their rule in India, they ordered in the mid 19th century, to survey and re-survey all lands, including 'Poromboke'. The survey was undertaken and the plans of every area with old and new survey numbers were prepared. Every temple, well, grave or any other construction on the wet and dry land, were marked with a symbol. These records are preserved in the government land-survey archives. Going through the part of the record, pertaining to Varahūr, we find the location of the present Siva temple has been marked with the symbol allotted to graves, with a short note, "Nārāyaṅasāmi grave". 'Nārāyaṅasāmi', is nothing but 'Nārāyaṅa Svāmi' and in all probability, our N. Teerha. 'Teertha' and such other suffixes are usually dropped by the aliens. As we know, there was no other 'Nārāyaṅa Svāmi' in and around Varahūr, except N. Teertha. As such, we deduce the conclusion that the present Śiva temple at Varahūr is the original samādhi of N. Teertha, dispelling all doubts.

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The 'adhishtāna' at Tiruppūnturutti is under the management and control of the Kunřakkuđi Ādheenam, probably, for more than a century. A sign-board displayed in the samādhi premises at Tiruppūnturutti, proclaims, in Tamil, "*Kunřakkuđi Ādheenattin paripālanttiřkutpatta Śree Ananta Padmanābha Teertha Nārāyaṅa Samādhi*" (The Samādhi of Śree Ananta Padmanābha Teertha Nārāyaṅa, under the care and administration of the Kunřakkuđi Ādheenam). Already we discussed and understood that N. Teertha and Ananta Padmanābha Teertha Nārāyaṅa were two different saints, who belonged to different periods. If it is the real samādhi of N.Teertha, the display would not find a place there. On the other hand, it clearly mentions that the samādhi is of Ananta .P. Teertha Nārāyaṅa. The samādhi of a Vishńu bhakta, under the control of a Śaivite Mutt? Somewhat trifling. But, Teertha N. was only a Śaivite and devotee of Śiva and Subrahmaṅya, all through his life, according to the works of Gaṅėśa Śrautigaḷ and Śivan Svāmigaḷ. No wonder his samādhi is mangaged and administered by a Śaivite mutt.

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It would be of interest to present here a portion of the discussion, the present writer had, during an interview with Śree-la-Śree Deivaśikhāmaṅi Aḏigalār, the former pontiff of Kunřakkuḏi Ādheenam. I give here only an extract from the portion that is relevant to the present topic. He explained:--

"Śree Teertha Nārāyaṅa Svāmi, with the 'pūrvāśrama' name, Ananta Padmanābha, was a devout devotee of Lord Muruga. He lived at Tiruppūnturutti and attained 'Jeevasamādhi' there. You might have seen a board displayed in the samādhi....About a century ago, when this samādhi got dilapidated, the villagers appealed to our ādheenam, for help. Being the samādhi of a 'Muruga bhakta' and a great saint with miraculous powers, our ādheenam undertook the renovation and also made arrangements for the daily pūja and other rituals, to be done by some 'Śaiva aḏiyār' and thus the administration of the samādhi came to the adheenam. It also started to celebrate the 'ārādhana' of the saint on every Śukla Ashtami day in the month of Māśi, though in a simple and humble way.

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Much importance given only to mass-feeding. This was going on from a very long time…..Very recently, when a group of local people from Tiruppūnturutti, headed by Rādhākrishńa Gāđė Rāo Sāhib, approached me seeking permission to celebrate the ārādhanā in a grand manner, the ādheenam granted it. From then on, it is the custom for them to write to us, well in advance, every year for permission and we have never said 'no'….You know, our ādheenam is not that much financially resourceful like the 'bigger matams'….But, mind you. We never concur with these people, regarding the name of the saint, but still, we don't refuse permission, only with the idea to encourage some good festival on that soil. While I once presented a lecture there, I stressed that the saint to whom the ārādhanā festival is celebrated is Teertha Nārāyańa Svāmigaḷ. Do you know it is quite surprising that many people, even well-educated ones, think Teertha Nārāyańa and Nārāyańa Teertha were one and the same! May be because of the similarity of names. Anyway, they celebrate

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thinking, the festival is to N.Teertha, while, we rest contented that the festival is to a 'Muruga bhakta', Teertha Nārāyaṅa. That's all....."

Festival to any great saint, sage, venerable person and such others could be celebrated at any place of one's choice. For instance, Tyāgarāja festival is today celebrated, not only all over India, but also in different other countries. This is a thing to be encouraged and taken in good spirit. Similarly, festivals to commemorate Śree Nārāyaṅa Teertha may be celebrated in Varahūr or Tiruppūnturutti or at any other place. But, this need not in any way cataract our eyes from entertaining the merit and greatness of either the saint or his final place of rest.

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